

# ***IPs, ITs and ETs at the Tip of the Spear***

## ***Letter from Iraq***

By Sharon Anderson

Since the start of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Navy technology specialists have been an essential part of tactical planning and operations. Information Professional Officers (IPs) and enlisted Information Systems Technicians (ITs) and Electronics Technicians (ETs) have been building a critically needed communications infrastructure and providing direct support to operational commanders.

They have excelled in ground combat communications roles that have traditionally belonged exclusively to the U.S. Army Signal Corps and Marine Corps. For three years, these dedicated technology warriors have battled hazardous combat conditions, extremes in weather, an austere living environment and long working hours as part of joint and coalition efforts to secure democracy and fight terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Almost all are volunteers motivated by

their commitment to the U.S. mission and their shipmates from every Service and coalition nation.

Some personnel are working under the leadership of Rear Adm. Nancy E. Brown, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications and Information Systems (DCS CIS) for the Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I). The MNF-I mission is to build a network of Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I) support for joint, combined and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) operations in the Iraq Joint Operations Area (JOA). Others are working for the Joint Operations Center (JOC) or in other crucial areas.

Cooperation between players and forging partnerships are key to building communications capabilities. In addition to joint and coalition partners, personnel work with industry, the U.S. Embassy, the Iraqi Ministry of Communication, the Ministry

of Defense, the Iraqi Interim Government and the Iraqi Minister of the Interior.

Concentration is focused on C4I capabilities to ensure situational awareness to shorten the decision-making cycle for the field commander. Networks and other IT capabilities are being built according to joint standards for interoperability and information sharing. Efforts have resulted in increased bandwidth, secure and non-secure voice and data capabilities, and vital command and control nodes extending services to the most remote military bases in Iraq.

### **Doing Whatever Needs to be Done**

IT2 Jeremy Headrick is the Information Work Space manager at Camp Victory. He says he has installed IWS on more than 100 computers and trained countless people on the program since he has been in Iraq.



*From left to right: Capt. Scot Miller, Lt. Cmdr. Dave "Sammy" Samara, IT2(SW) Miguel Gomez, Lt. Brian Jones, IT2 Jamone Robinson, Rear Adm. Nancy Brown, IT1(SW) Steven Schwalbe, Lt. Dale Shigekane, Lt. Cmdr. Danelle Barrett and IT2 Jeremy Headrick.*



*Clockwise from right: IT2 Miguel Gomez onboard a Black Hawk helicopter on a trip to the International Zone (IZ) in downtown Baghdad. IT2 Velez Charles and Lt. Dale Shigekane on the roof of Adnon Palace installing a microwave antenna to provide voice and data services to the National Joint Operations Center. Shigekane and Charles work in the U.S. Embassy in the IZ. Shigekane is the director of network operations for the the U.S. Embassy for the MNF-I Coalition Information Coalition Sharing (CIS) Forward.*



He frequently flies by Black Hawk helicopter to different theater locations to install the IWS collaborative tool suite. IWS is a command and control chat tool on the coalition network, the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System or CENTRIXS. Headrick says the work he is doing is saving time, money and lives.

"Troops and field commanders can talk to each other in chat rooms, if their secure phones are not working. They can discuss troop movements .... They actually use what I do to keep them from having to travel. It is really dangerous here to move from one location to another, so there is less need for troop movement and less risk," says Headrick.

Headrick calls IWS a weapons program. All of it is Web based. "It has different chat rooms.... It is based on a very wide range of technologies. It is like AOL (America Online) with a Webcam. It is specifically for the military. We built it for ourselves."

IT2 Jamone Robinson works in the JOC as a webmaster. "I make sure there is adequate bandwidth; I consider anyone who works in the JOC to be my customer," says Robinson.

To prepare for deployment, Navy personnel spent two weeks at Fort Bliss, Texas, for weapons training. In a heightened security posture, personnel wear body armor (ballistics flak jacket with plates) and Kevlar helmets. They also carry an MCU2P chemical mask. Officers carry a 9mm weapon and ammunition with them at all times. Enlisted personnel carry an M-16 rifle with ammunition.

IT1(SW) Steven Schwalbe says being in

Iraq is a challenge in itself with the heat, dust storms and daily rocket and mortar attacks by insurgents. He works in the JOC doing basic IT work using Windows XP Professional.

"We fix Microsoft Outlook problems, printer issues and we set up conference calls ... whatever needs to be done."

Schwalbe has been at Camp Victory about three months. He says there are good days and bad days.

"Sometimes we wear bulletproof vests. We have to carry weapons with us and sometimes we have to wear Kevlar helmets. Basically, it's been pretty good for us here, but sometimes it can get a little hectic during the day because you don't know what's going to happen."

IT2(SW) Miguel Gomez, who is working in the knowledge management process at Camp Victory, is building a database of subject matter experts for a yellow pages/white pages directory. It will help personnel find the assistance they need by typing a query for an online search.

Lt. Brian Jones is an IP working in the Knowledge Management Division on CENTRIXS.

"The people we support are decision-makers and those who provide logistics support to the troops in the fight. We help to make our customers work smarter, more effectively and more efficiently," says Jones.

IT1(SW) Bruce Long is the Electronic Key Management System (EKMS) manager for Camp Victory. Long performs convoy duty

on dangerous routes to deliver communications security (COMSEC), i.e., electronic or paper keymat for cryptographic equipment or encryption keys for secure telephones. He also stands tower watch duty along the perimeter of the camp.

IT1(SW) William Behr handles command, control, communications and computer issues for all joint, coalition and Iraqi Security Forces operations. "I support communications and information systems for 135,000 deployed air, ground and sea forces from 29 nations across Iraq," Behr says.

Behr resolves system outages and works with all the military Services and civilian contractors throughout Iraq, an area roughly the size of California.

"My customer base is the whole country of Iraq, but my more notable customers include General George W. Casey, Commanding General Multi-National Force-Iraq, Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, Commander, Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the JOC and the U.S. Embassy."

The JOC tracks information and intelligence for all operations in the Iraq area of responsibility. The embassy is, of course, the United States diplomatic arm in Iraq.

"For the MNF-I and the MNC-I commanders, I ensure that they are able to directly communicate with the President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army on a weekly basis," says Behr.

Some military units have pitched in to buy satellite systems for television or Internet service. But Behr says the military



purchased a service called VBrick, a “desk-top television service,” which is a network video software decoder stream player that provides feeds of various news and sports networks.

“We have access to FOX News, CNN, AFN Sports, and even unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) footage through VBrick. The program is accessible on both the SIPR and CENTRIXS networks,” says Behr.

## A Typical Day at Camp Victory

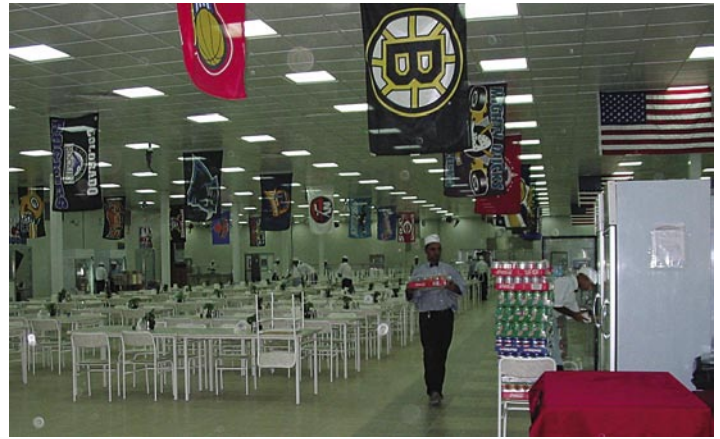
Lt. Cmdr. Dave “Sammy” Samara is new to the IP Community. “I’ve been an IP since May. I spent the last 14 years flying EA-6B Prowlers.... I went to seven different schools in the San Diego area to learn the Navy C4I architecture and how Navy ships communicate. It gave me a baseline understanding of how military and specifically Navy communications work,” says Samara.

Samara is the plans deputy for MNF-I CIS (Coalition Information Sharing) and the NATO 256K link action officer. The NATO network is a 256K microwave link that will provide service to about 2,500 coalition partners in the International Zone (IZ) in downtown Baghdad. It will support the NATO Training Mission Iraq, NTM-I.

Work days are long in Iraq. Samara’s day starts at 4 or 5:00 a.m. “I go for a run in the dark, but I know the road. Then to the gym, which is pretty darn nice. I get cleaned up, breakfast at the huge chow hall; it’s the size of a warehouse. If we did not exercise and watch what we eat, we could gain weight on this deployment. There is plenty of food to choose from in the DFAC or dining facility. In the Navy we just say chow hall, but we are in the Army over here,” Samara says.

Samara has three networks to check once he gets to work: SIPRNET, NIPRNET and CENTRIXS. “We talk with people from individual units, civilians, like one of the civilian contractors who is here putting up microwave towers. Some of the contractors are prior military; some have never been in the military. You work with quite a variety of people and they are all different Services, Navy, Army, Air Force, Marines,” says Samara.

*The Army DFAC or dining facility at Camp Victory. “If we did not exercise and watch what we eat, we could gain weight on this deployment. There is plenty of food to choose from in the DFAC,” says Lt. Cmdr. Dave “Sammy” Samara.*



Samara says the chief difference between the work Navy personnel are doing from the U.S. Army Signal Corps is in the area of tactical communications.

“Most of the signal officers deal with tactical communications. They go into an austere environment and set up wartime communications. I am working with one of those guys right now in plans, and they tend to be very engineer focused.”

“What we need to do, at least in the plans department of the Force CIS, is think strategically, we need to think big picture, we need to think enterprise. We can’t just do this because our battalion or our brigade or our division is out here fighting. We have got to think: How does this affect the entire country of Iraq? How does this affect the coalition in the entire country of Iraq? How does this allow an opening for continued and future expansion of the network and service to additional or different users?” says Samara.

Samara is working with a U.S. Air Force major assigned to NATO in Naples. They e-mail daily trying to nail down the requirements for Coalition Information Sharing (CIS) services.

“We discuss the microwave link and how users are going to be able to access NIPR, CENTRIXS, and if SIPR is going to be an option based on IA (Information Assurance) policies and procedures. Do they have DSN and the IDSN phone services they need? A lot of issues revolve around the fact that they are going to be moving from one building to the next and then maybe branching out to some other areas. How do we get communications to the new location?” says Samara.

“The NATO personnel are also bringing some equipment into the country, and they will need a frequency request for that, so that they can use NATO’s unique services, NATO’s secret and unclassified networks. These are some of the complex issues we are dealing with,” says Samara.

## A Lasting Communications Infrastructure

Before these technology warriors came to Iraq, most of the communications infrastructure was centered in the densely populated areas, but even then service was sketchy at best. Since there are virtually no landlines, Iraqis rely on cellular phones. But there are no roaming agreements, so communication to remote areas is almost nil.

Through cooperative efforts among the three commercial cellular service providers more towers have been added. But according to an Army spokesman, towers are installed as security allows, since in some areas, progress has been hampered by insurgent activity. To help ease the problem with cellular service, the United States operates a private network, which is used by the coalition and some Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) officials.

The buildup of the cellular network will immediately benefit the Iraqi people, other parts of the communications infrastructure will be transitioned to the Iraqi people as the U.S. military leaves the country.

The coalition’s objective is to leave behind a commercially-owned and maintained infrastructure capable of supporting a global reach.

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